



## FIVE PRENATAL MEMORIES

By Christie Hickman

*Do you remember being born? Is it even possible?*

*Have you ever wondered if your child will remember prenatal life?*

Years ago I wrote a research paper about Prenatal Memory. I had no children so I observed a friend as she asked her two year old son if he remembered anything. I also interviewed a family member about the experience of asking a child about prenatal life.

There are some provisions to consider when you decide to have this conversation.

- Your child must be able to talk and have enough vocabulary words to form a description.
- You should ask your child sometime between the ages of two and three because the memories will be tucked away in the sub-conscious after that.
- The conversation must be initiated by the mother. This is a special connection between mother and child. Family and friends should not approach a child and ask for these private details without the mother's permission and presence.

Here are the first three stories followed by some background information:

*First Toddler said, "The drums were too loud".*

**Background:** This mom was a music teacher. Every day after lunch she taught the percussion instrument class and her baby moved more than any other time of the day.

*Second Toddler said, "My head got cold."*

**Background:** The delivery of this baby took almost 3 hours during the pushing phase. And from the moment she was born she was not happy unless she had something on her head. She continued to wear hats as she grew up. Once she started school she was forced to leave her hat at home. But several times she was caught sneaking a hat in her backpack and put it on by the time she got off the bus.

*Third Toddler said, "There was poop in my face and I went like this (punched his fist in the air)".* His Mom asked, "Do remember hearing anything?" Toddler pointed to mom's chest and said, "Yeah, you know, boom, boom, boom." Mom said, "You mean my heart-beat?" Toddler smiled real big and said, "Yeah!"

**Background:** This toddler was being potty trained and had successfully pooped prior to these remarks. He may have remembered seeing the umbilical cord and called it "poop" because of the visual reference. His mom also explained that he was born with one arm sticking out and that the delivery was excruciating and dangerous because of the additional circumference of the head plus arm.

Years later when my own son was two and a half, I decided it was time to find out if and what he remembered. He was a very articulate child. I held him on my lap and spoke quietly and calmly. I asked if he remembered being a baby in mommy's tummy. He shook his head



while his straight, blond bangs swished across his forehead. I coaxed him. Do you remember being born?

He put his fingers together to create a circle about the size of a pencil eraser and said, ***“There was a teeny tiny hole and I broke it and made you cry.”***

I assured him that he did not hurt mommy. Then I asked if he remembered hearing or seeing anything when he was in mommy’s tummy?

He shook his head vigorously and fixed his eyes on my neck. Then he leaned forward and hollered at my throat, “Tommy, you in there?”

**Background:** The pregnancy was high-risk in addition to many tests for an irregular fetal heartbeat. Several times a day I would pat my tummy and say, “Tommy, you in there? How are doing, buddy?”, then would continue talking and bonding. I was hospitalized with preeclampsia at 37 weeks. Had amniocentesis to see if his lungs were mature enough to be born. I was scheduled to be induced however I lost my vision and was induced a day early. He was born 33 hours later after a difficult labor and vacuum suction delivery. Apgar scores were low and he was rushed to Children’s Rainbow for evaluation. After spending 8 days in the hospital we were released with a clean bill of health. When he was able to walk he had an obsession with vacuum cleaners and by the time he was 7 we had collected over 25. He is 26 now and still reminds me about how upset he was when I made him get rid of the collection.

So, when my daughter was about the same age and like her brother, had a large vocabulary, I couldn’t wait to see what she would tell me about prenatal life. But she was a very rambunctious child so holding her on my lap for very long was almost impossible. I managed to start the conversation, asking if she remembered being a baby in my tummy. She wiggled around while shaking her head, “Yes”. I quickly asked if she remembered being born. She stiffened and slid off my lap, walked a few feet from me, squatted, grunted and said, ***“You pooped me out.”*** Do I really need to explain? Obviously my daughter was paying attention!

This is quite a phenomenon and I assure you that I had never, ever discussed childbirth with my children. Besides, they were only two years old at the time and we hadn’t had any conversations about where babies came from before they were two.

What are some memories you hope your child will have about the prenatal growth period and childbirth? What can you be doing to communicate with your baby before birth?

***Writing Prompt: Pretend you are a baby and describe your prenatal environment and birth.***